



## Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s CFO

**For the labor rights and all human  
rights of the maquiladora workers**



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### Alcoa 2006 in Ciudad Acuña, the Free-Trade Union Land

#### CFOmaquiladoras.org

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##### Tyranny against wages and benefits

Despite the fact that Ciudad Acuña is one of the poorest cities in the country, Alcoa for three years froze all wage increases for its ten thousand workers in the city and only granted a 4 per cent increase two months ago. Nevertheless, this small increase has rapidly vanished because the company has also in the past three years eliminated the system of raises and promotions based on seniority. Under the new system, every worker supposedly was to have an opportunity to be evaluated for promotion, but in reality the workers are not appropriately informed about these evaluations. In other cases, promotions are granted at the discretion and according to the favoritism of team leaders and supervisors.

The rank and file has responded by showing to the new hires photocopies of the seniority system/chart they had a few years ago. The chart demonstrates how the workers were able to be promoted. Today that motivation does not exist anymore.

##### Big failure of the bonus for perfect attendance for three months

The workers and the CFO told Alcoa in February 2005 that the new system for granting the attendance bonus that the company wanted to implement would fail and result counterproductive to the company's intention, which was to decrease absenteeism.

Before, this bonus was 500 pesos, paid every month. The change was to give 1,500 pesos every three months, with the big difference being that one absence during that period would cause the worker to lose the entire bonus. But instead of reducing absenteeism, the workers now lose heart after one absence and no longer feel motivated to avoid absences since they have already lost their three-month bonus. Before, the worker lost one month's bonus for an absence, but still had the hope of getting the bonus the following month.

##### More pressure on the workers

The supervisors harass the workers, writing them up or threatening to do so. This is done not to help the workers but to force them to quit. For example, a worker will be written up if she does not want to perform mandatory overtime on Saturdays, or if she is one minute late returning from the lunch break. To go to the bathroom, a worker needs permission and must carry the permission slip. In some areas there is only one permission slip, and bathroom trips are limited to ten minutes twice a day. In addition, some supervisors and team leaders are dishonest and arrogant, or in league with disruptive employees. Anyone who criticizes them will be treated badly by the company. Given the just-in-time production system, the workers must work faster than ever, with better quality, and they must be able to perform different operations. Whereas in the past there was a reserve supply of harness components, now there is not; if a part is defective the workers are charged for it.

##### End to incentives for workers

Alcoa has just finished dismantling a small incentive program that had been carried out every December. First the company stopped giving out blankets to each worker at Christmas. Then they withdrew a transportation assistance program that provided each worker with the equivalent of US\$30 to go to his or her state of origin in December. They also got rid of the special cash bonus that was given to each worker who returned timely to work at the beginning of January. Previously, Alcoa wanted the workers to come back, but now it appears it no longer cares. As Alcoa has greatly reduced its working conditions and increased pressure on its workforce, turnover of personnel in the plants has increased, because other maquiladoras such as Dylsa, Irvin, Jaropamex, and others in Ciudad Acuña pay better than the "world class" Alcoa company.

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